

2005, as Family Day. I call on the people of the United States to observe this day by spending time with family members and reaffirming the important relationship between parents and children and the vital role that families play in our society.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

George W. Bush

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on September 21. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

September 17, 2005

Good morning. This week I visited Mississippi and Louisiana and reported to the Nation on our strategy to help our neighbors in these devastated areas recover and rebuild. In the aftermath of Katrina, we have seen our fellow citizens uprooted from their homes, searching for loved ones, and grieving for the dead. These scenes have touched our hearts and moved our whole Nation to action. And the outpouring of compassion has sent a clear message to the victims of this storm: Our whole Nation cares about you; you are not alone.

The recovery of the gulf coast region will be one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen. And I have made a pledge of the American people: Throughout the area hit by the hurricane, we will help our citizens rebuild their communities and their lives.

Our strategy rests on three commitments. Our first commitment is to meet the immediate needs of those who had to flee their homes and leave all their possessions behind. As of this week, more than 500,000 evacuee families have gotten emergency help to pay for food, clothing, and other essentials, and they will receive broader help in the future. I've asked for and the Congress has provided

more than \$60 billion, an unprecedented response to an unprecedented crisis.

Our second commitment is to help the citizens of the gulf coast put their lives back together and rebuild their communities. Our goal is to get people out of shelters by the middle of October. So we're providing direct assistance to evacuees that will allow them to rent apartments, and we're beginning to bring in mobile homes and trailers for temporary use in affected areas. We will also help provide housing for the many workers who will rebuild cities in the region so that reconstruction can move forward quickly.

To relieve the burden on local health care facilities in the disaster areas, we're sending extra doctors and nurses and setting up well-supplied temporary community health centers. A number of States have taken in evacuees and shown them great compassion, admitting children to school and providing health care. So I'll work with Congress to ensure the States are reimbursed for these extra expenses.

Our third commitment is to ensure that the communities we rebuild emerge better and stronger. Out of this tragedy comes an opportunity to harness the good and gracious spirit of America and deliver new hope to neighborhoods that were suffering before the storm. Our reconstruction efforts will be guided by certain principles: When cities are rebuilt, those cities should have many new businesses, including minority-owned businesses. When houses are rebuilt, more families should own, not rent, those houses.

To achieve these aims I've proposed the creation of a Gulf Opportunity Zone in the disaster area, with immediate tax relief and other incentives for job-creating investment. And to encourage homeownership, I have proposed a new urban homesteading act, which would identify property in the region owned by the Federal Government and provide lots to low-income citizens free of charge, through a lottery. In return, they would pledge to build on the lot with either a mortgage or help from a charitable organization like Habitat for Humanity.

As we rebuild homes and businesses, we will renew our promise to be the land of

equality and decency. And one day, Americans will look back at the response to Hurricane Katrina and say that our country grew not only in prosperity but also in character and justice.

Our citizens have responded to this tragedy with action and prayer. We ask God's comfort for the men and women who have suffered so much. We pray that the missing find safe return and those who were lost find holy rest. And we sought the strength of the Almighty for the difficult work that lies ahead.

In the life of our Nation, we have seen that wondrous things are possible when we act with God's grace. From the rubble of destroyed homes, we can see the beginnings of vibrant new neighborhoods. From the despair of lives torn asunder, we can see the hope of rebirth. And from the depth of darkness, we can see a bright dawn emerging over the gulf coast and the great city of New Orleans.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on September 16 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Afghanistan

September 18, 2005

I congratulate the Afghan people and Afghan Government for today's successful parliamentary elections, which are a major step forward in Afghanistan's development as a democratic state governed by the rule of law. Braving deadly attacks and threats of violence, Afghans voted in large numbers for representatives to their new National Assembly and Provincial Councils. We commend the tremendous progress that the Afghan people have made in recent years, and we pledge the full support of the United States as Afghanistan acts to meet the new challenges ahead.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the Homeland Security Council and an Exchange With Reporters

September 19, 2005

The President. I just met with my Homeland Security Council to discuss ongoing relief efforts in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. I have made it clear that I believe it's a national security matter for people to review emergency plans. And so, therefore, I've instructed Secretary Chertoff and folks around this table to work with our local counterparts to make sure that we've got emergency plans in place that will deal with significant disaster. And for the local folks, I urge them to cooperate in a review of these plans. It's important.

Secondly, one of the things that I heard loud and clear on my travels down there was that people are concerned about redtape. And one of the big concerns for the mayors and the Governor of Mississippi, in particular, and the mayors along the gulf coast, was this issue about debris removal—who's responsible, how can we get it done in an effective way. And I want to thank the Secretary for working with Governor Barbour on this issue to expedite a process by which we can start getting some of this debris removed from a part of our country that was just wiped out by this storm; I mean, there are piles and piles of homes and buildings just in rubble. And in order to help this region get rebuilt, first things first, and that's to get rid of the debris. And so we've got a plan in place to cut through the redtape and get this done in an effective way.

On another matter, a couple of other matters—one, I want to congratulate the people of Afghanistan for showing up at the polls and defying the Taliban and those who threaten their lives and say, look, you know, these people supported democracy. It's just another step on their road toward a stable democracy, and we congratulate them.

And as well, I want to welcome the comments of the OPEC and non-OPEC nations, talking about making sure they get enough supply on the markets to help, hopefully, affect the world price of crude oil. I have been concerned about the price at the pump that our folks are paying. Part of that was caused